

The Sacramento District Review

4 Lost Lodge Rd, Cloudcroft, NM 88317

575-682-2551

Timber Management in the Sacramento Mountains



Before thinning treatment

- Mickey Mauter

This is the last article in a four part series on the timber industry in the Sacramento Mountains. Previous articles included Early Logging on the Sacramento Mountains, Logging Companies and Timber Products, and Market trends that Shape the Timber Industry.

The local timber industry has an exciting future, full of possibilities, that is tied to balanced forest management.

What exactly does forest management mean? For the USDA Forest Service, this falls under a large umbrella of different resources and objec-

tives, and can vary from forest to forest. As spelled out by Congress, the mission of the USDA

Forest Service is "Caring for the Land and Serving People". This means providing a range of outdoor opportunities and resources to as many diverse groups of people as possible, without long term, negative impacts to the environment.

The forests in the southern Sacramento Mountains are dynamic and always changing. If one thinks about all the forces that affect what forests look like at any given time one begins to understand how complex our forests really are and how management objectives may shift the natural

balance one way or another. If left alone natural disturbances will make sure the natural balance is maintained, but because humans place demands on forests for all the renewable resources they provide, a heavy burden is put on a wide range of sensitive habitats.

Diversity in species distribution, structure (trees of different sizes), and spatial reference (how groups of trees are spread out over the landscape) are key to any healthy functioning forest ecosystem.

One year after thinning treatment



"September days have the warmth of summer in their briefer hours, but in their lengthening evenings a prophetic breath of autumn. The cricket chirps in the noontide, making the most of what remains of his brief life. The bumblebee is busy among the clover blossoms of the aftermath, and their shrill and dreamy hum hold the outdoor world above the voices of the song birds, now silent or departed."

- September Days By Rowland E. Robinson, Vermont.



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Timber Management Cont...



Hauling logs from an area project

Objectives derived by public involvement contribute to how the USDA Forest Service manages a certain area, but even after those objectives are accomplished the forest keeps growing and changing, which can also change what the objectives will be twenty years from now.

A healthy forest environment is more complex than thinning trees to a specific spacing. When deciding what kind of treatment will be applied some of the most common attributes considered include: How close is the treatment to private land (the wildland urban interface)? Where does the treatment lay on the land

by aspect (is it a warm or a cool site)? How steep is the terrain? What habitat is associated with the area to be treated

(mixed conifer, ponderosa pine, spruce, etc.)? What insect or disease issues are associated with the project area? And, are there animal or plant species that certain treatments favor?

Treatments bordering private lands are geared toward reducing risk to homes by decreasing fire intensity. These prescriptions require leaving fewer trees per acre by removing more of the smaller trees that aid the spread of fire into the crowns of larger trees.

With the increasing push from humans to live in the wildland urban interface, the risk to private property has also increased.

The lack of naturally occurring fires has increased the potential for high intensity fires burning over much larger areas. Allowing fires to naturally thin the forest is no longer a viable option in some areas with the expanse of this wildland urban interface development. The options to reduce this risk mechanically are expensive and only last a few years before needing maintenance. This requires reintroducing fire as a tool, and can be controversial.

When all of these pieces are considered the result is an effective plan with the best treatments for a given area, and collectively is forest management. The timber industry is a vital part and important tool in managing the Lincoln National Forest as a scenic, enchanting, and productive place for all to enjoy for many generations to come.

Prescribed burning season to start soon

The Sacramento Ranger District Fire and Fuels managers wish to inform our mountain neighbors that weather permitting; they will conduct prescribed fire and pile burning starting in September.

When prescribed burning begins, signs will be posted along highways affected by smoke. Motorists are urged to use caution. Residents in local communities as well as the public may see and smell smoke for the duration of these prescribed burns. As always, firefighter and public safety are a top priority.

Office Hours

The Sacramento Ranger District Office is located in the Village of Cloudcroft, at 4 Lost Lodge Road, one mile south of Highway 82 on Highway 130. We are open Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Closed Federal Holidays. Open Saturday's, 9 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. through Labor Day.

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The New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse



Mighty Mouse? No it's the New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse

- Rueben Gay

Did you know the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, *Zapus hudsonius luteus* (NMMJM) can jump up to ten times its body length? These fascinating creatures are not called jumping mice for nothing. They are capable of making leaps of up to three feet; an incredible ten times their body length.

The NMMJM is a very unique water-loving animal that lives along the riparian areas of southwestern rivers and streams. What makes this mouse so

unique are its large back feet, which aid in jumping from grass to grass and also swimming around riparian areas.

The NMMJM is a semi-aquatic animal, but unlike the other subspecies of meadow jumping mouse, it is only found in areas that have year-round water flow, and is rarely found away from running water.

Another characteristic which makes them unique is the amount of sleep they need. For instance, the NMMJM found in the Sacramento Mountains may hibernate for ten months

of the year. These little mice forage along the banks and edge of streams to

fatten up for their long hibernation period. Ultimately, perennial moist or wet habitats provide the mouse with an abundant food source and an ideal living environment. They forage in areas up to 300 feet in size eating fruits, seeds, insects, snails, slugs, and millipedes.

The Sacramento Ranger District is currently gathering data on the NMMJM to study its population density, preferred habitat, and how it has responded to the current drought conditions.

A New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse



District campground and day use schedule

The campgrounds managed by the concessionaire on the Sacramento Ranger District will soon be closing for the season.

Pines, Deerhead, Sleepy-grass, Aspen, Blackbear, Slide, Apache, and Saddle campgrounds will close September 6th.

Silver and Silver Overflow Campgrounds will close October 11th.

Upper Fir and Lower Fir Group campgrounds will close October 3rd.

The day use area at the Trestle Depot is open until it snows.

James Canyon and Upper Karr campgrounds are open year round while Lower Karr will close when it snows.

The Bluff Springs semi-developed area is open year round, but difficult to access in the winter.



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The Ranger's Report



James Duran

Sacramento District Ranger

Since the last Ranger's Report I have had inquiries about Forest closure and restriction procedures, and thought I would provide insight into restricting uses on National Forest lands when dry conditions exist.

The essential components to fire are expressed by what is known as the "Fire Triangle". The first element is the **fuel** source, which in our environment is found in the form of forest vegetation. Fuel will exist as long as a form of forest vegetation exists. A fuel source doesn't automatically

mean the fuel can support a fire. Moisture is a big factor in the rate at which fuel will burn.

The second element is a **heat** source which is the primary focus when managing the threat of wildfire during dry periods. This effort is aimed at reducing human caused ignitions. When fuel moistures are low and allow for optimal conditions of an ignition, some form of a restriction or closure is often the only option. The goal is to limit the amount of human interactions in fuel sources to reduce the risk of a human caused ignition.

The third element is **oxygen**, which most often is expressed with wind. This will impact the rate at which the fuel will burn and we can all remember how windy this past spring and summer were.

Fire restrictions and

closures are a management tool used to address the fire triangle elements we can manage. Do restrictions or closures remove the risk of all new fires? No, other ignition sources exist and sometimes are uncontrollable, so even with closures and restrictions we will have fires.

Our goal is to limit the amount of wildfires and ensure the safety of the public and fire fighters when fires start. I'd like to thank everyone who cooperated with and assisted the Sacramento Ranger District through restrictions and closure periods. The effort was very successful and human caused fires were kept to a minimum which is a sign of effective management.

-Until next Month,

James Duran, Sacramento District Ranger

Write a letter to the Ranger

If you've ever wondered about timber harvests, endangered species, off-road vehicle use, or other natural resource management topics, this is your opportunity to get your answer.

Individuals aspiring to acquire knowledge about the US Forest Service are encouraged to escape the fast-paced world of technology and write a good old fashion letter to the Ranger.

If you would like to write a letter to James Duran, Sacramento District Ranger please mail it to: P.O. Box 288, Cloudcroft, NM 88317.

